

Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria Mr. Daniel Mitov
for the International Conference in Support of the Reconstruction of Gaza
/Cairo , 12th of October, 2014/

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express Bulgaria's high appreciation for the hosts of this event, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Norway. We believe that broad participation at such high political level will certainly result in raising needed financial support for the people in Gaza. More importantly, this format will highlight the urge to get the Middle East Peace Process back on track.

The Middle East has faced dramatic changes in many respects these last several years. The price, however, for these changes has been too high for everyone. Too many innocent lives have been lost and many more are not up to a bright future. Yet still, there haven't been many long due achievements in the name of a sustainable outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to account for the high price of human devastation. With all that has been done, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict still remains one of the most serious challenges not just in the MENA region but also globally. Yet, it is high time today to send a clear and explicit political signal, a united appeal, if you will, to both Israel and the Palestinians. And the appeal needs to be - "Get back to negotiations". Negotiations which are candid, frank, straightforward and where the declared intentions are in harmony with the actions on both sides. Negotiations which will bring not only temporary truce but sustainable peace and will grant us the opportunity to meet for the last time on the issue of reconstruction. Negotiations remain the only single acceptable venue available to those who wish a lasting solution of the Israeli – Palestinian conflict based on a two-state solution.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We understand what Gaza faces today. The human suffering there will be prolonged and possibly exacerbated, should we not address and deliver on plans for recovery of the infrastructure, the economic and social sectors, and the issues of governance. Speaking of governance, our stance is that the Palestinian Unity Government ought to exercise its functions throughout the Palestinian territories, especially with regard to its legitimate control over security and armament issues.

Currently Bulgaria shelters thousands of refugees who have fled their homes in hope of a possibility for a future. I must confess that it has been hard for Bulgaria to cope with providing for basic human needs of refugees. But we understand that as a country we should contribute towards making life back home an option for those who left, and alike, for those who are still there.

To this end, my country has been consistent in supporting the efforts of the Palestinian Authority to build functioning democratic institutions. We have provided regular financial support to the people in Gaza through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA). Today, again, within the scope of our capabilities, we would provide our sincere contribution towards the international efforts for recovery of Gaza through the UNRWA.

In the spirit of our own beliefs, we deem that any contribution and subsequent expenditure should be backed by the existence of a transparent and effective monitoring mechanism. This is an important precondition for peace. The international community and all sides respectively, should be ensured that their efforts and resources are put to the use for which they were intended. In this respect, we commend the fact that the National Recovery and Reconstruction Plan envisages the formation of such mechanism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Let me conclude by saying that Bulgaria remains hopeful that Gaza could be transformed. Furthermore, we hope to witness the people in Gaza with those of the West Bank in unity. We expect the Palestinian Unity Government to function effectively and fully, thus laying the ground for upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections within a reasonable timeframe. These steps are indispensable prerequisites for a future viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace with the State of Israel. I would like to end with something a wise man has said: "If you can't go around it, over it or through it, you had better negotiate with it."

Thank you for your attention!